

## THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

PO Box 915, North Haven, CT 06473-0915 Phone: (860) 404-0333 • Fax (860) 673-0819

E-mail: info@connpsych.org • Web: www.connpsych.org

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Michael Schwarzchild, Ph.D. Director of Professional Affairs Senator Musto, Representative Urban, and Members of the Select Committee on Children:

As a psychologist from Glastonbury who works frequently with children and families in the State's care, I urge the Select Committee on Children to support SB 323 An Act Concerning Department of Children and Families Reunification Plans. Specifically SB 323 prevents the Department of Children and Families (DCF) from concurrently planning Termination of a Parent's Rights (TPR) at the same time as reunification with the parent.

Concurrent planning efforts were designed in the late 1990's with the intent of providing a more timely permanency for children in the system by avoiding the sequential process of ruling out one permanency plan before another is explored. While this might seem efficient and practical it has been my clinical experience that it is emotionally devastating for all parties — especially the child. In two recent cases in which I have been involved, the time period of foster care has been more than two years — two years that the child has had to bond with two separate families who love and care for him and who cannot help but want different outcomes. No matter what the initial intention of concurrent planning, it is highly unlikely that the foster and adoptive families can be expected to support the "competing" parents. This inevitably places the child in the position of torn loyalties. And no matter how often we tell children 'there is room in your heart to love everyone', children who have already suffered too much are hurt more.

As a psychologist, I understand that there are no easy answers in issues related to the uniqueness of personalities, the development of families, and the abuse and neglect of children. This well intentioned idea of concurrent planning for TPR and reunification, however, often makes it more difficult for foster children to feel and be happy in a family. Again I urge the committee to support SB 323 An Act Concerning Department of Children and Families Reunification Plans.